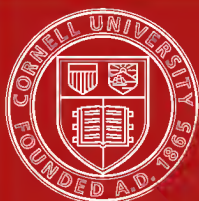


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# SUEZ CANAL & CHANNEL TUNNEL

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## PEACE OR WAR WITH FRANCE?

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*SPEECH*

OF

THE RIGHT HONORABLE JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.

AT BIRMINGHAM

June 15th, 1883.

WITH A PREFACE

BY THE HON. FRANCIS LAWLEY.



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## PREFACE.

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THE illustrious Duke of Cambridge, the Commander-in-Chief, gave the following answer to a question in the course of his "evidence" before the Select Committee of Members of both Houses appointed to consider and report as to whether France and the Continent of Europe should be annexed to England by a SUBMARINE TUNNEL :—

*Question :* It has been suggested, in case of war with any country but France, we might draw our supplies of food through the Tunnel. I would like to ask, is not our danger of foreign war twenty times greater with France than with any other country ?

*Answer :* I should imagine so, most certainly.

The great Lord Nelson believed in hatred to the French as an article of religion ; and the illustrious Duke, evidently, is a believer in this dogma, and, in addition, has "invasion on the brain." It is not the object of the following pages to ask how it is that, with a military and naval annual outlay of twenty-seven millions and a half pounds sterling, contributed by the tax-payers of the country, the national defences should be in so deplorable a state of weakness as the illustrious Duke and Lord Wolseley represent. Be this as it may, the case wants looking into ; and the *country*—which neither desires to go to war nor fears any other power, relying on its eight millions of patriotic men—will have to deal with the problem and before long.

The contention of the illustrious Duke and of Lord Wolseley is threefold. First, that we must always expect as a certainty of the future, more or less imminent war with France ; secondly, that we may, without any declaration of war, be invaded by France ; and thirdly, that we are helplessly unable to retaliate by landing a force, in return, on the French coast anywhere. The sturdy speech of the Right Honorable John Bright, M.P., now printed by authority, completely demolishes the hob-goblin arguments which have just been repeated for the twentieth time ; and it is thought desirable to supplement that speech by asking Englishmen calmly to consider this dread of French invasion by the lights of history, experience and common sense.

At the commencement of one of his incomparable "Lectures on Modern History," Dr. Arnold reminded his hearers of the Greek sophist, who discoursed at length upon the art of war when Hannibal happened to be amongst his audience. Some of his hearers, full of admiration for what they deemed the speaker's eloquence and knowledge, applied eagerly to the great general for his opinion, not doubting that it would confirm their own. To their ineffable surprise, Hannibal's answer was, that he had met with many absurd old men in his life, but never with one so absurd as the lecturer before him. The recollection of this story should never be absent from the minds of unprofessional men when they undertake to discuss professional mysteries. "*Cuique in arte sua perito credendum est,*" says the Latin proverb ; but, on the other hand, it must never be forgotten, that, as a rule, a man has but one profession, and naturally resents the Procrustean prohibition, which forbids him to pass

a judgment upon all subjects lying outside of it. It is, moreover, the inevitable tendency of all professional men to look at their calling from within, and never from without: for which reason statesmen of the highest class, to whom no subjects ought to come amiss, have to speak and decide upon questions of war, of general policy, of religion, morals, political economy and finance, with a rapidity and precision to which no specialist can pretend to lay claim. Yet, although a statesman cannot be soldier, sailor, lawyer, clergyman, merchant and political economist at once, his unprofessional opinion upon professional subjects is often of the very highest authority.

Applying these thoughts to warlike matters, we shall see, adds Dr. Arnold, that "the part which unprofessional men can least understand is the practical management of soldiers in action and upon parade." Let a man be ever so familiar with military history he must be well aware that upon these points a drill serjeant, or even an *aguerri* soldier, knows infinitely more than himself. When, however, we recede from these details, and contemplate the strategy of a general, and the entire management of a campaign, it cannot be doubted that civilians are entitled to be heard upon military topics; upon the risks which it is possible for soldiers, assisted it may be by sailors, to run; and upon the moral and political influences which affect every human enterprise.

If Dr. Arnold were alive to-day no one who had read his "History of Rome," his "Lectures upon Modern History," and the notes to his edition of Thucydides, would entertain the faintest doubt that his opinion upon the advisability, or the reverse, of connecting England with France by a Submarine

Tunnel would be received with the very greatest respect. Everything in Dr. Arnold's writings goes to show that he had the instincts not only of a statesman but also of a soldier. During the Crimean War, again, it was notorious that the letters addressed to the *Times* by "A Hertfordshire Incumbent"—the Rev. J. W. Blakesley—were of the greatest military value. Here, then, we have two clergymen, who never heard a bullet whistle in anger, and yet were endowed with a peculiar insight into everything bearing upon war. One other instance may be quoted, to show that unmilitary men are sometimes of immense use in their suggestions to soldiers. No man ever enjoyed a greater and more deserved reputation as a military engineer than Sebastian de Vauban, who "fortified 300 ancient citadels, erected 33 new ones, had the principal management and direction of 53 sieges, and was present at 140 general engagements." Yet he has left it on record that he learnt more about the art of fortification from one Italian civilian, who, although a cripple, helped him to take Luxemburg, than from all the soldiers he had ever associated with or opposed. The phrase most frequently on his lips was, "There is no such engineer as common sense."

For these reasons the attempt to confine opinions upon the Channel Tunnel to military and naval men alone, and to resent the discussion of this subject by civilians as an insult to our gallant defenders by land and sea, seems as hopeless as it is unreasonable. It may be said of Englishmen, as Pericles said of his compatriots, the Athenians, that "they regard the man without interest in politics as an unprofitable rather than an unmeddlesome member of the com-



munity.” \* To contemplate such a political work as the Channel Tunnel solely through military spectacles, would be tantamount to disregarding every lesson of the past, and to ignoring the arguments of such civilians as Mr. Richard Cobden, whose pamphlet, entitled “The Three Panics: an Historical Episode,” published in 1862, may be warmly commended to the notice of the opponents of a work which, sooner or later, is sure to be completed. Nearly forty years have passed since the first of Mr. Cobden’s “Three Panics” shook the English vessel of state from stem to stern. As usual, the panic began with a comparison between the strength of the French and English navies. It was fomented by the publication of a pamphlet or memorandum from the Prince de Joinville’s pen, in which the writer concluded with these words: “In this tractate I have compelled myself to make my country undergo an afflicting comparison with a country advanced so much before ourselves in comprehension of its interests. Although I have been obliged to expose the secrets of our weakness, as compared with the greatness of British power, I should think myself happy if, by the sincere avowal of these sorrowful truths, I were able to dissipate the illusion, indulged in by so many well-informed Frenchmen, as to the real condition of our navy, and to decide them to ask with me for those salutary reforms which can alone give our navy a new era of power and glory.”

The Prince de Joinville’s words seemed to imply that at some unknown date in the past, the French

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\* Μόνοι γὰρ τὸν μηδὲν τῶν πολιτικῶν μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα ἀλλ’ ἀχρεῖον νομίζομεν.—Thucyd. II. 40.

navy had seen “an era of power and glory;” but without pausing to ask him “When?” we may notice that his very harmless wail, which not one Englishman in a million ever read, was misinterpreted as a threat against this country. Towards the end of 1847, this impression was confirmed by the appearance of a “Letter upon our National Defences,” written by the Duke of Wellington, which its writer never intended to meet the public eye.

It is the fashion with American officers, who, as a rule, are closer readers of military history than their English *æquales*, to rank Marlborough above Wellington, on the ground, perhaps, that the former belongs to America as much as to England, and that the latter is English alone. No living Englishman, however, would be found to speak a disparaging word about the Iron Duke when in his prime. But the Duke’s *brochure* on England’s National Defences appeared two and thirty years after Waterloo, his last battle, was fought; and in 1847 he spoke of himself thus:—“I am bordering upon seventy-seven years of age, passed in honour. I say, then, that there is not a spot on our southern coast, unless it be immediately under the guns of Dover, upon which infantry might not be thrown ashore at any time of tide, with any wind, and in any weather.”

Commenting upon this passage, Mr. Cobden says, with irresistible cogency:—

“Any person in the habit of visiting Hastings or Eastbourne knows that for half the year no prudent mariner brings his vessel within several miles of that coast, and that there is a considerable extent of shore where a landing is at all times impracticable. It may be safely affirmed that if anyone but the Duke of

Wellington had stated that there was any shore in the world on which a body of troops could be landed 'at any time of the tide, with any wind, and in any weather,' the statement would have been deemed undeserving of comment. The assertion passed, however, unnoticed at the time, and the entire letter was quoted as an unanswerable proof that the country was in danger. To have ventured on criticism or doubt would have only invited the accusation of want of patriotism."

It may here be remarked, parenthetically, that panic, and a ready credulity and alacrity in accepting and entertaining it, are always regarded in this country as evidences of patriotism. No slight degree of moral courage is wanted in either soldier or civilian to argue that his countrymen, although the bravest race in the world, are also what Americans call "the scariest." It needs a large acquaintance with, and a protracted sojourn in, foreign countries outside of Europe to teach an Englishman what is thought of this country by strangers, who seldom regard it with friendly eyes. We are so fond of believing that some other nation is preparing to invade us—that gun for gun we are no match at sea for France—that something has happened, or is about to happen, which fundamentally alters our position, and leaves us comparatively at the mercy of some hypothetical foe, that panic-mongers have always had, and always will have, a glorious time of it in our midst. Perhaps no speech has made a profounder sensation during Her Majesty's reign than that delivered by Lord Lyndhurst in the House of Lords on the 5th of July, 1859. It was received with applause so rapturous as to astonish men familiar with the usually

quiet atmosphere in which it was spoken. The impressive delivery and great age of Lord Lyndhurst lent as much weight to his words as attached to the not dissimilar utterance of Lord Chatham, when he sank a hundred years since upon the floor of that House in which his voice was never again to be heard. Commenting upon Lord Lyndhurst's mighty effort, the "Quarterly Review" of July, 1859, remarks:—

"No nobler speech was probably ever delivered, even to a British House of Parliament, than that of Lord Lyndhurst on the 5th of July—clear and truthful in its statements, unanswerable in its logic, and rising almost to sublimity in the prescience with which he pointed out the danger of the state, and warned the nation of the horrors of the abyss on the verge of which it is standing. Unless every citizen will now arm himself; unless every servant of the state will apply his whole energies to see how the danger may best be met; unless every statesman will sink all minor differences and apply his whole power to prepare for the great struggle, it may happen that the last spark of liberty that exists in Europe may be trodden out, and the British name be lost from among the great nations of the earth, in a catastrophe such as has not appalled the world since the downfall of the Roman Empire."

These words, set on fire by Lord Lyndhurst's torch, have the true panic ring, and, strange as it may seem, words like them will always be popular in this country. The author or object of Mr. Cobden's first panic died an exile at Claremont; the author or object of the second and third died an exile at Chislehurst. It may further be remarked, that in 1870—71, the French fleet, of which for forty years

the terrors have been brandished in our faces, was absolutely powerless to effect the least diversion in favour of the sinking French army, even against a nation so weak at sea as Germany. No one ventured in 1859 to criticise the following alarmist words of our "old man eloquent" who had never seen war:—

"I know, my Lords, from information I have received, and the accuracy of which I do not doubt, that the French are at this moment building steamers each of which is constructed to carry 2,500 men, with all the necessary stores and appliances."

If by "necessary stores and appliances" were meant a week's ammunition for 2,500 muskets, the *tentes d'abris*, without which no French regiment moves, the commissariat waggons and supplies necessary to feed 2,500 men, say for forty-eight hours, and the field artillery and horses proportionate to that amount of infantry, each of Lord Lyndhurst's imaginary French steamers must have been a Great Eastern.

Here, then, we have a civilian who, when dogmatizing about war and invasion, of which he has had no practical experience, finds his words accepted without a demur from any practical soldier, because they harmonize with what is unhappily the prevailing temper of this nation. Not such is the view taken of the Anglo-Saxon race by foreign soldiers who have seen war on the grandest scale, and passed many years in this country. Here are the words of General Richard Taylor, the son of Zachary Taylor, who was elected President of the United States in 1849\*:—

"The breed to which these whites belong has for

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\* "Destruction and Reconstruction:" by General Richard Taylor. *Blackwood*. 1879.

eight centuries been master of the earth wherever it planted its foot. A handful of them conquered and holds in subjection the crowded millions of Hindoostan. Another and smaller section bridles the fierce Kaffir tribes of South Africa. Place but a score of them on the middle course of the Congo, and they will rule until they are exterminated."

During these eight centuries, there have again and again been opportunities for a French force to land in these islands under circumstances far more favourable to the invaders than any that one or a dozen Channel Tunnels could place them in possession of; but with two insignificant exceptions no such foolhardy attempt has ever been made by our neighbours since the Norman Conquest. Upon February 22, 1797, a French force landed about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the west of Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire. The following extract is from "Black's Guide to Wales:"—

"The invading force consisted of 1,400 men, 600 of whom were regular soldiers, while 800 were criminals liberated from French prisons. They effected a landing, and after a night devoted to plunder and intoxication, they surrendered to a few militia and volunteers, not half their own number, hastily brought together under the command of Lord Cawdor. It is commonly added, that the invaders were panic struck on seeing a number of Welsh women in their beaver hats and red whittles, ranged on the summits of the adjacent hills. Fear transformed these women into formidable reserves of military, to contend with whom appeared hopeless; and accordingly the French commander sent in a flag of truce, and agreed to an unconditional surrender."

On August 22, 1798, a French force, 1100 strong,

landed, under General Humbert, at Killala, in Mayo. Lord Cornwallis, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, advanced to meet them. The sister island was in almost open rebellion ; and although the French were accompanied by three Irish rebels, Matthew Tone, Bartholomew Teeling and Sullivan, and were joined by other Irish insurgents after landing, not a single Frenchman escaped death or capture. "Some," according to "Ross's Memoirs of Lord Cornwallis," "were killed in action, 96 officers and 746 rank and file surrendered at Ballynamuck, and the remainder were captured at Killala and other places."

Despite these two abortive and ludicrous attempts at invasion, Mr. Bright is held up to military contumely for hazarding the opinion that with 35 millions of inhabitants in Great Britain and Ireland, of whom 8 millions are grown males, it would surely not be difficult to defend a hole in the earth rather more than 20 feet wide. No one thought of sneering at Lord Lyndhurst as an ignorant and presumptuous civilian, when, nearly a quarter of a century since, he told his fellow countrymen that they were "standing unconsciously on the thin crust of a volcano which was about to burst under their feet." Many similar speeches have since then been delivered in both Houses of Parliament, and no amount of falsified prophecies and of warnings, which events have shown to be utterly without foundation, will probably preserve us from the delivery of many more utterances of a like kind in future.

In the meantime, it cannot be out of place to remind Englishmen that the landing of a large force of armed men upon a hostile coast is, without any exception, the most difficult and dangerous operation of war.

Landsmen who have crossed the Channel from Cherbourg and Brest—the only two western ports at which, according to Lord Clarence Paget, large masses of French troops could be embarked—would, even in calm weather, have little stomach for fighting when they had been for a dozen hours at sea. The French are execrable sailors, and the “unexpected flotillas,” from which the invaders are to descend upon our shores, would inevitably fail in their object, unless, in addition to a perfectly still sea, at least forty-eight hours of total immunity from attack or disturbance were insured to the men on board of them. It would be well if the experience gained from past history were turned to some account in considering this question. Many officers are living who witnessed the unopposed landing of English and French troops in Eupatoria Bay, which commenced on the 14th of September, 1854. They will, therefore, be able to pronounce upon the correctness of the following description from Mr. Kinglake’s “Invasion of the Crimea :”—

“Unless a man has stood in the admiring crowd which gathers to see the process of landing one horse upon an open sea-shore : and unless while carrying in his mind the labour and energy brought to bear upon this single object, he can imagine the same toil gone through again and again, and yet again, till it has been repeated many hundred times upon a mile and a-half of beach, he will hardly know what work must be done before a general can report to his government that he has landed upon an open coast with 1,000 cavalry and 60 guns ready for the field. By labour, never once intermitted (except when darkness or the state of the sea forbade it), and continued from the



morning of the 14th until the evening of the 18th, the whole of the English land force was safely landed upon the enemy's coast. The result was, that under favourable circumstances of weather, and with the advantage of encountering no opposition, an English force of some 26,000 infantry and artillerymen, with 1,000 cavalry and 60 guns, had been landed in the course of five September days."

Take another case on the other side of the globe.

War having broken out in 1846, between the United States and Mexico, it was resolved to land a strong column of American troops at Vera Cruz, and after reducing the formidable castle of St. Juan de Ulua to march upon the Mexican capital. The following extract is from the "Life of General Winfield Scott":—

"Great pains had been taken to procure information, and General Scott was engaged for several weeks in making the necessary preparations. A corps of sappers and miners, mountain howitzer and rocket batteries, heavy ordnance, large quantities of missiles and ammunition transport vessels, bomb-ketches, and surf-boats to land the troops, were ordered to be organized and despatched to the Gulf of Mexico without delay. The troops were ordered to rendezvous at the island of Lobos, lying just off the Mexican coast. It was late in the February of 1847 before the troops reached Lobos, and just before nightfall on the 5th of March the whole fleet bore down into the roadstead of Vera Cruz, blocking up the bay with a dense forest of masts and spars. Careful reconnaissances of the coast were then made, and on the 9th of March the debarkation was ordered to commence."

It will thus be seen that General Scott found it necessary to rendezvous at an island off the coast, to lie there for nine or ten days, to make reconnaissances

from the sea for five more days, and to employ an enormous fleet. Such being the conditions antecedent to landing 10,000 men without opposition, the American Civil War affords countless examples of the almost insurmountable difficulties of landing in face of opposition. It is to be regretted that, in addition to visiting General Lee's camp in Virginia, Lord Wolseley had not an opportunity of seeing how flimsy were the earthworks which enabled Fort Fisher, at the mouth of the river leading to Wilmington, in North Carolina, and Charleston, in South Carolina, to hold out for nearly four years against repeated and most formidable attacks. Upon many spots of that exposed coast, miles upon miles of sandy tract lie open to descent, and the Confederates had no ships to send to sea. Nevertheless, with a battery or two of field artillery, which reserved its fire until the invaders' boats were close ashore, General Hoke, and other Confederate commanders, had no sort of difficulty in preventing a landing, or in driving the Federals back to their boats if ever they got ashore. When, at the end of 1864, "an armada, far more formidable than its namesake that menaced the coast of England in 1588, took up its position before Fort Fisher," it would have astonished men inexperienced in war to see what an amazing effort was needed before it was deemed possible by General Grant, who ordered the expedition, to land 5,000 men at a point where their debarkation was sure to be opposed. Suffice to say, that a fleet of considerably more than 100 vessels was arrayed for weeks off the coast of North Carolina. To those, in fact, who have ever seen even one regiment of soldiers huddled together on board ship for half-a-dozen hours at sea, it would appear as ridiculous

to prate of, "unexpected flotillas" landing 50,000 men in a night upon Pevensey Beach or in Pegwell Bay as of despatching an aërial army in balloons to capture London.

Happily nature has prescribed conditions, which for eight centuries have made these islands practically inaccessible to an invader. Will the creation of a Tunnel under the Channel expose us to any risks which do not exist already? On the other hand, signs abound on all sides, presaging that our commerce is slowly but surely declining. In the "Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers," we are told that Edmund Burke once remarked to Mrs. Crewe, "England is a moon shone upon by her neighbours across the Channel. France has all things within herself, and possesses the power of recovering from the severest blows. England is an artificial country: take away her commerce, and what has she?"\* Fresh fields must, in short, be open to our trade, or *actum est de Republicâ*.

It is pretended, indeed, that hostilities often break out suddenly without any formal declaration of war being made by the country commencing them. A paper, said to have been compiled by order of the present Government, and much dwelt upon by the Duke of Cambridge, gives more than 100 instances in which this anomaly has taken place. In this connection it may not be without interest to quote the

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\* In the number of "Harper's Magazine" which appeared last December, Mr. Thomas W. Knox tells us that, "In its commerce with the United States, Havre holds the second place among European ports, Liverpool being the first; nor is it improbable that Havre will soon surpass the great mart on the Mersey in its American trade." The statistics of the traffic carried on these last ten years by Antwerp and Bremen show as marked an advance as those of every great English port, with one stationary exception, show a marked decline.

following questions and answers from H.R.H.'s evidence :—

*Question* (Lord Aberdare): "I think your Royal Highness has admitted that, although in very many instances acts of war have been committed before war had been actually proclaimed, that has never happened until relations between the two countries had become extremely strained?"

*Answer* (Duke of Cambridge): "Yes."

*Question*: "That alone would constitute a warning which any prudent nation would, I presume, use for the purpose of seeing that its defences, especially that at which the most immediate danger threatened, were in order?"

*Answer*: "But it is a very bad moment to do it when relations are strained, because it almost assumes that you think war will come."

*Question*: "That, no doubt, would be the result of an overt act; but surely it would not apply to seeing that all the means and appliances for obstructing or destroying the Tunnel were ready for immediate use?"

*Answer*: "I think London and all parts of England would be very much surprised, when relations are delicate, to read in the morning papers that these things were being tested."

Now, without pausing to notice, that in these three answers H.R.H. twice changes his ground, and altogether abandons his original position, that, even at the close of the nineteenth century, hostilities might be suddenly commenced by the French without declaration of war, it would beyond all question be far more surprising to London and the rest of England to learn from the newspapers that no preparations had been made for seeing that the Tunnel could be instantly destroyed, when war was at any moment possible.

The truth is, that in all calculations of this kind time is always on the side of the defence. "You say," wrote Sir William Molesworth to the Editor of the "Spectator," on January 17, 1848, "that the next attack on England will probably be without notice; that 5,000 Frenchmen might inflict disgrace on some defenceless post; that even 500 might inflict indelible disgrace on the empire at Osborne House. Good

God! Can it be possible, that you, whom I ranked so high among the public instructors of this nation—that you consider the French to be ruffians, Pindarees, freebooters—that you believe it necessary to keep constant watch and ward against them, as our Saxon forefathers did against the Danes and the Northmen, lest they should burn our seaport towns, plunder our coasts, and put our Queen to ransom.”

The mischief of permitting our neighbours across the Channel to think that Englishmen of the highest rank regard them as pirates and freebooters is twofold. In the first place, it inclines each Frenchman to exclaim, with Lady Teazle, “I won’t be suspected without cause;” and, secondly, it suggests that “suspicion always haunts the guilty breast.” There are many reasons why our neighbours have more reason to fear a Channel Tunnel than we have. England has twice taken and long held French towns — Calais and Dunkirk to wit—while France has never owned a foot of English soil since the Conquest. Talk of “unexpected flotillas,” capable of throwing masses of armed men upon a defenceless coast; and what resources have the French for such an attempt as compared with ourselves? A sudden descent of Englishmen thrown ashore upon the sandy dunes near Calais would be far more likely to succeed by reason of our immense superiority at sea, than a similar enterprise undertaken by Frenchmen. Yet no word of panic has ever been spoken against the Channel Tunnel by the quick-sighted nation, which must naturally feel that one of the inevitable results of its construction will be to enable England to act on the Continent as a land power. If France were engaged in a death-grapple, for instance, with Germany or

Russia, an English army of 30,000 men, holding the French end of the Tunnel, and threatening the whole of Northern France, would be of ineffable assistance to France's enemy. With what feelings, then, must our lively neighbours contemplate the terrors which the very name of a Channel Tunnel awakens in our most illustrious English soldiers?

In 1847 Ralph Waldo Emerson concluded a speech at the Manchester Athenæum with words of singular significance. "I feel," he said, "with regard to this aged England, with the possessions, honours, trophies, and also with the infirmities of a thousand years gathering around her, irretrievably committed as she is to many old customs which cannot be suddenly changed, pressed upon by the transitions of trade, by new fabrics, arts, machines and competitions—I see her not dispirited, not weak, but well remembering that she has seen dark days before—indeed, with a kind of instinct that in storm of battle and in gloom she has a secret vigour and a pulse like a cannon. I see her in her old age, not decrepit but young, and still daring to believe in her power of endurance and expansion. Seeing this I say, All hail! mother of heroes! with strength still equal to the time, still wise to entertain and swift to execute the policy which the mind and heart of mankind require at the present hour. If it be not so, if the courage of England should fail, I will go back to Massachusetts and say to my own countrymen: the old race are all gone, and the elasticity and hope of mankind must henceforth remain on the Alleghany ranges, or nowhere."

For many hundreds of years, and up to the close of the great wars in 1815, conflicts, more or less bloody, have either been ending or beginning within every

generation of men between France and England. These wars have settled no principle, and to a small extent only have they affected national boundaries. Their effect has been for long periods to grind the common people of both countries down into the very dust. At this day, we, in the United Kingdom, should have neither customs nor excise to pay were it not for the great debt accumulated by reason of such wars. This country, in fact, would be one great free port and city, the cheapest in the world, and, as such, all who work would soon find their whole social state uplifted by the abundance and peace of such a grand revolution.

Amid centuries of cloud and storm two sunny spots of peace appear in the history of France and England. The one—the happy three years following the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, made by William Pitt, in 1786. The second—the no less happy twenty-one years following the Treaty of Amity and Commerce made by Richard Cobden. In neither period was there a whisper of war in France or in England. It is for the people of our country to say, whether there shall be—

“ PEACE OR WAR WITH FRANCE ? ”





*Speech of*

The Right Hon. JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.,

AT

BIRMINGHAM,

*June 15th, 1883.*



MR. BRIGHT, who on rising was very cordially received, said: Mr. Mayor and gentlemen,—I received this address, as I hope it becomes me, with the thankfulness that must necessarily be excited in the mind of anyone to whom an attention of this kind is offered, especially by a municipal corporation, if not old, yet renowned amongst the corporations of this country. I can only hope that the atmosphere of commendation and praise in which I have been living during this week may not impair the simplicity and the moderation of character which I have always—perhaps not always successfully—endeavoured to preserve. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) I observe in this address one paragraph to which perhaps I may be allowed to give rather special attention. It is the paragraph which says: “As the governing body of a great commercial town we cannot, however, refrain from especially alluding to your fervent devotion to the interests of peace and goodwill among the great family of nations.” (Loud applause.)

We have, from the course of policy pursued by our forefathers in recent generations, become allied to portions of the earth, territories, in almost every part of the globe. There can be, therefore, hardly anything more necessary than that we should, with regard to our necessarily extensive foreign affairs, see what it is our duty to do, and endeavour if possible to discover what is the wise course for a great nation.

At this moment there are two questions which strike me as of some importance in connection with this view. We are nearest a country of large population, of great renown—a population governed now, not under the form of Government under which

we live—and a country and a people with which in past times we have been not incessantly but very often engaged in sanguinary strife: I allude to our neighbour, France. At this moment there are two questions which are being discussed in this country, and which refer to that country, on which, if you will permit me, I should like to say a few words.

The first to which I allude is the question of the Suez Canal. You have seen from the newspapers that within the last two or three weeks there have been meetings in London of shipowners and others, some no doubt speculators, men of enterprise anxious to engage in something new, something great, and, as they hope, something, doubtless, profitable. Now they have appointed a deputation to our guest of last night, Lord Granville, and have discussed this question with him. They have stated that the traffic of the Canal is great beyond all expectations, which is not unreasonable, seeing that the intention was to prevent the Canal being made; that the delay in the transit of ships is increasing and very inconvenient, and that the cost of the dues which are exacted by the Company are high, and, as they allege, excessive. Now they have begun lately to make angry complaints upon these points.

As to the traffic men are astonished now at the magnitude to which it has attained. I venture to foretell that 10 or 20 years hence men will find that the traffic now was but in its infancy. It is impossible to say to what magnitude that traffic may attain within not a great number of years. If you look at the map you will see to what parts of the world it goes—India, China, Japan and Australia. Half the world must come backwards and forwards through that Canal. It is impossible to say what it will grow to, and nothing can be more reasonable than to say that the Canal, as at present existing, is not sufficient—and will not be sufficient—and that it must be made much wider or a new Canal must be made.

Now these complaints have become much more urgent since the occupation of Egypt by English troops. No doubt these gentlemen in London thought, "Now we have got hold of the

country we do not choose to pay 20 per cent. to M. Lesseps's Canal, we will have a Canal all to ourselves, and we will be masters of our own transit between this country and our great Indian Empire." Let us first look a little back and see what has been done. M. Lesseps proposed to make this Canal. He offered to the people of this country their share of the providing of the capital that would be needed. In this country the proposition was received with considerable favour, and, I believe, generally—as was only rational—the Chambers of Commerce were in favour of the proposed scheme.

All at once, not a great statesman, in my opinion, but a powerful Minister, put his foot down upon this scheme, condemned, denounced it, preferred that we should continually go round with our ships the other way rather than anybody else should get up a nearer road; and the Chambers of Commerce, with a humility and a submission pitiable to remember, shut their mouths, and, I suppose, not a five pound note probably, was contributed to the capital of the Canal from this country. What was the result? It was thrown necessarily into the hands of France, and the French people felt that the scheme being partly suffocated by the English Minister's opposition, that it became then the more necessary to make strenuous efforts to make the Canal succeed. They did make those efforts, the Canal was made, and it is an enormous and admitted success; and to no country more a success than this, for I suppose at least three-fourths of the vessels passing to and fro through the Canal are in the possession of England and English shipowners.

Now, then, what is this change which has taken place? We—I do not say I, but we—the English nation, the English Government, the English press, they say so essential is the Canal to our interest that we are ready, if need be, to fight the whole world to keep it open. We who discouraged it—who would, if we could, have prevented it being made—now we are enthusiastic and resolved in its defence. There is no amount of millions of money or thousands of lives which, according to the tone of the press and many public men in this country, we should not be

ready to spend in order to keep open this water-way to India. And, in fact, as you know, within the last twelve months, we have been at actual war in Egypt simply on the suspicion—a suspicion, in my opinion, unfounded and false—that the Canal has been in danger. (Cheers.) However, on that suspicion there has been war, and deplorable consequences have ensued, and at this moment the troops of England are said to be keeping the peace in Egypt, and endeavouring to sustain upon the throne of Egypt a ruler who, if our newspaper correspondents are to be trusted, is not popular; and if our troops came away he would be obliged to come with them. (Laughter.) Now, on the question of the new Canal, if there is to be a new Canal, one of two things—we must either act with France or act against France. I should say not against, but with. (Applause.)

The policy of the last year in Egypt—the English policy—as was inevitable, created great irritation in the neighbouring country, and if, after the course they have taken in regard to this Canal, their enterprise, their outlay of capital, their great success—if we are to say, now, having got possession of this country, we will have a Canal of our own, we will have no further connection with M. Lesseps' Canal—then I think a strain would be put upon the cordial friendship that now for so many years has existed between the two countries, which would be at least highly undesirable, if it would not be highly dangerous. (Cheers.)

The Government and the Foreign Office have been appealed to. I don't think I can doubt what will be the course that Lord Granville and his colleagues will take. (Hear.) I am quite sure he will endeavour by all the means in his power to do that—to support that—only, which is judicious—judicious for all nations, and friendly and considerate to France—(hear, hear)—and will not allow the shipowners, and the speculators, and the men of great enterprise for great works, to dictate what shall be the course of the Government with regard to the matter. He will know that great national interests are at stake, and the concord between two great nations. All the nations of Europe have an interest in this question.

A little after the Canal was opened M. Lesseps was very anxious that it should be taken out of his hands, and out of the hands of the French proprietors, not to be placed in our hands, but to be placed in some kind of International Commission—(hear, hear)—by whom it should be managed, by whom, if necessary, it should be widened and deepened, by whom everything connected with it should be determined, and by whom it should be made open for ever, a free passage for all the ships of all the nations of the globe. (Applause.)

Sir Daniel Lange, I think, a gentleman who was in this country at the time an agent of M. Lesseps, called upon me more than once to discuss that question with me, and urged me to say something in respect of it; and I did at that time speak of it with some earnestness to members of the Government. I am not sure now—I cannot recollect accurately, and I have not referred to any memoranda for the purpose of clearing my mind—I will not say whether it was during the official term of Lord Clarendon, who died in 1870, or whether it was afterwards during Lord Granville's tenure of office—but I mentioned it to several members of the Government. Either the difficulties appeared so great, or there was a certain indifference with regard to it, that it did not seem likely to make any progress. But I am bound to say—it is not complimentary to my late colleagues, it is not complimentary to English statesmen—but it seems to me whenever the question of India comes up, English statesmen lose their heads. (Applause and laughter.)

The Crimean War came out of an absolute and childish delusion—with its half million of human lives sacrificed—that in some way or other our possession of India and its safety were involved in keeping Russia from any further encroachments upon Turkey. (Cheers.) The Afghan War the other day, under the late Government, was commenced by Lord Salisbury and by Lord Lytton, under an apprehension, which now appears perfectly insane and absurd beyond description, that any connection between Russia and the Afghan Ameer was likely to be dangerous to India, and to bring the Russians close upon the

northern frontier of that empire. And now this very deplorable incident of last year comes from the same idea. The Canal—I scarcely know how to describe what I mean—was to be defended at all risks by those who had wished it should not be made, and on the mere suspicion of injury to it, a great city is bombarded, and a deplorable catastrophe takes place.

Now, I should wish men, if they conquered India and held India, and tried to govern India well, they should endeavour also to be rational in their views of its position. And as to the dangers which I will not say surround—because they do not surround—but as to the dangers which are suspected in connection with our relations with India, my own opinion is that there is no country in the world that has the slightest interest or the slightest disposition to interfere with the government of India by England. (Cheers.) I believe Russia has no more idea of crossing the frontier into the Indian Empire, than we in India have of crossing the frontier and invading the Asiatic possessions of Russia. (Cheers.)

Well, let us now, when this question of the Canal is on foot and being discussed—let us, if we can, keep our heads cool and be sober in considering it. (Hear, hear.) Let us give no sort of sanction to anybody who thinks that it may be right, or justifiable or profitable, or possible, to get into any difficulty with France with regard to this matter. (Hear, hear.) Let us regard France as our friend, and, as the French people wish to be our friends—(applause)—let us go as far as it is possible to go—and I believe it is entirely possible—hand in hand with the Government and people of that country in settling this question; very small question indeed if we are all in good and right temper about it—(hear, hear)—but a very serious question if we proceed upon the lines which I am afraid some are anxious to pursue.

There is another question with regard to France upon which, if you will permit me, I should like to say a few words—(hear, hear)—that is, with regard to the magnificent and most in-

teresting project of making a Submarine Tunnel between that country and England. (Hear, hear.)

Fourteen years ago, in the year 1869, I was in the office now filled—and I must say filled with a great deal more capacity for its work than I possessed—by my right honourable colleague, Mr. Chamberlain. (Loud applause.) I was then President of the Board of Trade, and I received a deputation from a number of gentlemen, amongst whom I think was Lord Richard Grosvenor, which came to represent to me the reasonableness of a scheme for making a Tunnel under the Channel. But at that time they were anxious—as now I believe they are not—to ascertain if the Government would grant them a subvention, or guarantee them some rate of interest. I don't recollect the exact proposition, but it was that the Government in some pecuniary shape should give assistance to this project. I brought it before my colleagues in the Cabinet, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer at that time—who was Mr. Lowe, the present Lord Sherbrooke—took the view, which was very likely to be taken by a Chancellor of the Exchequer, that it was rather a wild proposition, and one to which—at that time, at any rate—the Government would pay no attention. And therefore it was dismissed. But at that time, although many thought it was a wild proposition that might not be carried out, still nobody—no one living, I believe—made the slightest objection to it upon the grounds upon which now objections are raised against it.

I am not in a position to express a confident opinion on a matter of this kind. I cannot tell whether, in an engineering point of view, the project is capable of completion: but as many eminent engineers—Sir John Hawkshaw for instance, Sir Frederick Bramwell, for instance, Mr. Brunlees, and I am not sure whether the vast majority of the engineering opinion of this country would not be in favour of the possibility of making the Tunnel, and in fact, of its being very easily and certainly made—well, then, I am willing to consent to and to accept that opinion. (Hear, hear.) Beyond that there comes the question of capital. It is not very likely that I should be

an investor in the Tunnel. But there are many men who would be, and a few millions—five or six millions, three or four millions, whatever it may be—would easily be raised in the City of London for a project like this; and if investors are willing to put their money in it, it would be presumption in me to offer any objection to their doing so. (Laughter.) Well, then, I assume the engineer question is settled and the capital question is settled. Then we are assailed—well, not assailed—but we have before us various opinions as to the utility of the Tunnel. As a matter of traffic for men and goods, there cannot possibly be, I think, differing opinions. (Hear, hear.) There are people probably very fond of going to sea—(laughter)—although it is a short enjoyment of an hour-and-a-half in crossing the Channel. There are far more people who don't like going to sea—and I almost think that, of all the agonising sights that have ever met my eye, the worst is that which I have seen now and then, in crossing the Channel, when a deathly pallor seemed to have seized the countenances of all on board. (Laughter.) Then we are met by an objection, to my mind, of the most extraordinary kind that ever was offered to any great scheme of human advancement. It is, that by making this Tunnel we shall be placing our national independence in serious peril. They say that England is an island.

Well, Great Britain is an island—I believe that has been admitted for centuries. (Laughter.) But there is what they call a silver streak, varying from, perhaps, twenty to one hundred miles wide between France and the southern shores of Great Britain. That is also quite true; and they have an idea that that silver streak has been the reason why we have always been at peace, the real fact being, as is known to those who have not forgotten their history, that until the last fifty years we have nearly always been at war. This island was rendered, in their sense, much less an island by the invention of steam navigation. I was reading the other day a manuscript giving a biographical account of an old friend of mine who died a few years ago in the neighbourhood of Manchester—Mr. J. C. Dyer, a very remark-



able man, an American by birth, living, I suppose, for half a century in this country. I think he was about ninety when he died. In this account he describes his coming over from America. I am not quite sure whether it was his final coming over to settle here, but he came over here for the purpose of disposing, if he could, of some American inventions. Even in that day, which was about 1814, the Americans were great in invention. At this day I generally ask an American who comes to me—and a great many come—whether he has not got a patent—(laughter)—and I have no doubt that after Mr. Chamberlain's promised bill is passed you will have to ask the same question of Englishmen. (Laughter.) But Mr. Dyer came over here, and one of the patents was for the establishing of steam navigation. He had been intimate with Mr. Fulton, who in the United States was the first promoter of that great change, and Mr. Dyer came to the shipowners and various people in London and tried to engage them to take up this patent, and establish steamboats on the Thames and in the Channel. He describes how entirely unsuccessful he was. He could not get any of them to look at it. I do not know whether any of them were afraid at the thought that the silver streak would be crossed in one hour-and-a-half instead of being crossed in three days, and sometimes a week. If you will go back seventy years you will see that the adoption of the system of steam navigation was, according to the idea of these terrified people, a strange and dangerous change, because, instead of vessels coming over by sail, being dependent entirely upon the wind, they would come over, whatever the gale, almost, and from whatever quarter the wind might blow, in one hour-and-a-half or two hours. Great ships with a thousand men on board!

I could draw a picture—if we had not lived over it and through it—I could draw a picture that would make your hair stand on end at the terrors which we were about to encounter by the establishment of steam navigation. (Laughter.) Steam navigation has been established, and nothing has come of it except enormous advantage to the Continent and to ourselves.

But you know that with steam navigation and with the ferry that now plies between England and France, there are twenty—fifty points on the coast at which a landing might be effected. Yet for all that, during the last fifty or sixty years, whilst this state of things has been growing every year more apparent, there has been a more complete peace between the two countries than at any former period of our history. And thanks to the increasing commerce which, during the last twenty years, has arisen between the people of the two countries, I venture to say that there is nothing in our history at all approaching the cordiality of feeling which we have witnessed during this last period. (Hear, hear.)

Now, recollect what this Tunnel is. I do not know what is the width of this room, but I suppose it would not be much more than half its width ; it might be something over twenty feet wide. It is at least twenty miles long. A Tunnel a mile long of that size looks a long Tunnel if you look at one end of it, or pass through it in a railway train. But twenty miles ! You can form no idea what it is, and yet there is a superstition—I should have supposed it was necessary to have gone to Bedlam to discover any man who could have entertained it—(loud laughter)—there is a superstition that with 35,000,000 of persons in Great Britain and Ireland, of whom 8,000,000 are grown men, they could not defend a hole in the earth—(loud laughter)—not much more than about twenty feet wide. Now, I don't know what number of trains would pass in a day through that Tunnel, but I should say—I thought—ten or twelve, but I saw in some of the evidence given before the House of Lords and Commons Committee the other day that—I think the calculation was that passenger trains and luggage trains, probably twenty, would pass through the Tunnel in the course of the day.

Now the people against whom I am contending go upon two assumptions which I take the liberty absolutely to object to. The one is, that the French nation is composed nationally, and in regard to the action of their Government—composed of brigands

—(laughter)—not of honest men, not of men according to the average of our political acquaintance and historical acquaintance, but men brigands of the worst and the most desperate character, (Laughter.) And at the same time they assume that the great English nation, which has its arm stretched all over the globe, at home is a nation of imbeciles. (Laughter.) We know that if these trains are passing to and fro—they must be passing through, whether it be to Calais, whether it be to Boulogne, wherever the Tunnel emerges on the French Coast—there must be men of all nations passing continually through this Tunnel—Englishmen by hundreds every day, by thousands every week and month; and yet there is an idea in the minds of some men that by some sudden, secret, undiscovered method until the catastrophe is developed, like a great explosion—that the French Government could arrange a succession of great trains, an army of soldiers, a vast collection of artillery—that all these could be put into this Tunnel—(a laugh)—from the French end of it, and although English people were passing every hour—(a laugh)—and the telegraph was there—that might be cut, that is true; they say it might be cut—but the very cutting of the telegraph would be a signal—(hear)—they say that all this could be done, and nobody in England or at Dover would know anything about it, and thus there might be an invasion of this country through the Tunnel.

Well, I feel that it is not a thing to be argued against—the thing is so incredible, and so monstrous—(hear, hear)—and so impossible, and so beyond the reach of all former imagination, that it doesn't appear reasonable that one should attempt even to expose it and to contradict it. (Cheers.) Then, these terrible foretellings come from great military authorities. I will give you one special description of what may happen. I believe it is the opinion of one of the highest military authorities in this country. It is this—there will be war with France. I suppose that is the first article in the creed of all the big soldiers. (Laughter.) I suppose they read nothing but about wars with France in the olden times, and they think it is the order of

nature that there should always be war with France. They are very much astonished, as some people are astonished that Vesuvius or Etna is quiet for a long time, and they think that there must be very soon a terrible eruption between this country and France. Well, I don't say that a war with France is an absolute impossibility, but I say that the man who constantly dwells upon it, and endeavours to lead men to think that such a thing is likely, is not a friend, I will not say to France, but he is not a friend to his own country or to the world. (Applause.) There will be a war with France—that is the beginning. I will not ask you to disbelieve that, although I think it is extremely unlikely. (Applause.) But this goes on, and the next is that we are to be very badly beaten, that the English flag is to be driven absolutely from the Channel, that then we are to make a disastrous peace, very much like that which France, in 1870, was obliged to make with Germany. In this disastrous peace, what do you suppose is to be one of the conditions? That Dover, with the territory of a few miles—say ten miles—round it, is to be surrendered in perpetuity to a conquering French army, and that France will retaliate upon us for our long retention of Calais by her future possession and retention of Dover. (Laughter and applause.)

Well, you can fancy probably what must be the condition of mind of the great military authority who has this scheme in his head, and dreaming about it all night—it can only have come from the land of disordered dreams. (Laughter and cheers.) Then he says that when France gets possession of Dover and the ten miles round it—which he supposes they can defend against any attack from whatever remnant there is of the English forces—then they are to bring over by train one hundred thousand men—any number of men—there will be nobody to say them nay, no gate to shut, and no force to contend with them—and the French army may, at its leisure, and in the best manner possible, make the journey by Tunnel, and arrive in this country, with the satisfaction that England is in some way to be tributary to France.

Now, that is not quite all the story, for another authority—not less important than the first—has got another scheme, as I saw in the newspapers a day or two ago. I am sorry we have not got the evidence *in extenso*, because I am quite sure if we had the evidence before that committee fully the people in this country would be able to form on a more complete basis an accurate view of this question which is before them. (Hear, hear.) But this other authority says he does not think the French would come over by the Tunnel—which is really very comforting. (Loud laughter.) But he says they will come by boats, and that they will seize this end of the Tunnel. (Laughter.) Well, if they can come by boats and seize this end of the Tunnel, why don't they come over by boats before the Tunnel is made? (Laughter and applause.) It seems to me that during the last fifty years there has been a constant increase in the number of boats, and I see no objection whatever—except that the English people may render it difficult—(laughter)—perhaps impossible. (Renewed laughter and applause.)

Now this is the sort of argument—(loud laughter)—which these anti-Tunnel gentlemen are offering to the sensible people of this country. (Laughter.) I would advise you never to take the opinion of high military authorities—(hear, hear)—except on a question of what should be done when you are actually at war. (Hear, hear.) I am not at all certain—I believe it possible and probable—that if we had had—if the Government had had—a civilian of commanding character and capacity in the harbour of Alexandria on the 11th of July last—(hear, hear)—there would have been no bombardment—(hear, hear)—no burning of Alexandria—(hear, hear)—no battle up the country, no slaughter of three or four thousand lives—(hear, hear)—and then the calamity which followed—there would have been nobody ennobled—(laughter)—and no pensions granted. (Laughter and applause.)

But my view of the case is this: that if the Tunnel were made, in three months' time everybody would receive it as a fact settled, the most commodious way of transport, and except

those who are always grumbling at railway directors—(laughter)—there are a great many of them—I am not one—(laughter)—other reasonable people would be grateful to the engineers who designed, to the contractors who executed, the work, and to the capitalists who invested their money in one of the most magnificent undertakings that the world has ever seen. (Cheers.) The military terror, I think, would be entirely allayed. I have observed some writers of newspapers and some public speakers who have not objected to the Tunnel at all, and have believed all these alarms to be absolutely unfounded, who still have got this notion into their heads, which shows the contempt they have of the intellect of their countrymen—that if the Tunnel were made and open it would be easy for these military authorities, or for some gunpowder manufacturer, to tell the people of England that their danger was tremendous, and that therefore it was necessary to spend millions in fortifying this hole twenty feet wide—(laughter)—lest the French nation should come by it; and therefore we should be liable to a succession of panics which would make our last position worse than the first. (Laughter.) Well, we have heard of things of this sort before. You heard some years ago of a great breakwater at Cherbourg, behind which the French navy was to assemble with a view to something dreadful to this country. After all, we found out this was merely a sort of bogey, and I do not know whether the Queen did not go over to Cherbourg to assist in the celebration of the opening of this breakwater. (Hear.) If you go to the Channel Islands, I think the Island of Alderney, you will find there an immense work which has been built at the expenditure of your taxes, of the toil and sweat of our labouring population, and where a million—I think about, if not over a million—of money was expended. My friend Mr. Milner Gibson, who knows a good deal about sea matters, and most other matters of public interest, went over there to examine all this. We opposed further grants of money in the House of Commons, and finally the grants were abandoned. The work, after having nearly a million spent upon it, was

never completed, and now the Government would be exceedingly glad if the whole thing could be carried at one lift by fairies or devils to the bottom of the sea. (Applause.)

But we have had even a later exhibition of this kind of terror in what you may call the Palmerston Forts down at Portsmouth. I believe, now, so far as I have been able to learn, nearly all military men, as sensible men in that day, ridiculed the idea of building these forts. I don't know the sum expended, but I think it must have been ten or twelve millions. I can't say accurately, but I know through the exertions of Mr. Gladstone, at a time when I thought he ought to have quitted the Government—by his exertions the sum originally intended to be expended by Lord Palmerston and his advisers was very much reduced. Take another case. After the termination of the American War there were proposals made in the House of Commons, not for any expenditure that was named, but that there should be some great system of defence between Canada and the United States, and that was another instance of the way in which we know that a great many men who ought to be in Bedlam are out of it. I took the liberty of opposing that scheme with such faculty as I possessed. I look back to it always with great sorrow, for I remember that it was to oppose that proposition that my dear and lamented friend Mr. Cobden left his home in Sussex, and came up to London on one of the most bitter days that the bitter month of March has ever furnished to the suffering people of this country. He came up on that day with the view of going to the House for the purpose of speaking upon this monstrous proposition, and on that day he received the chill which was to him the stroke of death. He lived but a fortnight afterwards, and he has left us, and gives us no further service except that which we may derive from the contemplation of his character, and from the admiration of the great qualities which he displayed to his country.

Now then, what shall we say about it? I don't know that I have any thing more to say. I suppose arguments such as I have used and illustrations would be of no use before a Parliamentary

Committee of the House of Lords and House of Commons. The matter ought to be discussed by the people. They are about to have an opportunity of relieving thousands and in course of time millions of our people from the trouble and agony which they endure in passing the Channel. I would advise them to consider how much it is to the interest of humanity that the nations should have free means of communication both personal and by train. If we have for the last fifty years lived on terms of amity with the French, why should we not live on terms of amity with them, not for fifty years but for five centuries to come. All that is possible. The people of France have no more idea of, by a sudden inroad, a piratical brigand assault, coming to this country with a view of assailing us, and of subjugating this realm, than we in this room have an idea of starting to-morrow for the purpose of a conquest of the city of Paris. Let us take our own great affairs of this kind into our own hands—(applause)—not leave them in the hands of excited military men—(hear, hear)—who seem as if some of them thought nothing of the calamity of war, but who are willing at every opportunity, I will not say to welcome its coming, but at any rate to create needless apprehensions with regard to it.

My own impression is, that the Tunnel, if it were made, would be of enormous value to this country, as it would be of great value to all Europe; but it would be of far greater value to this country than it would to any other country, unless perhaps it be to France. You would find, also, from the United States the traffic that now comes here would only the more come here, and would pass through the Tunnel on to the Continent; for the Americans, after the experience of ten days on the Atlantic, would, I think, generally be glad to be excused even a few hours in the Channel. (Laughter.) So that on the whole, looking at it as sensible men, assuming the engineers are right, and it can be safely made and worked, and assuming there are men who will invest their capital in the undertaking, I say every man, woman and child in the United Kingdom has an interest in this Tunnel being made; and I hope the absurd,



monstrous, extraordinary, inconceivable suggestions of alarm which are offered to us—and have been offered to this Committee—will be utterly disregarded and repudiated by the common sense of our countrymen. (Cheers.)

I thought that that paragraph in this complimentary and most kind address was an opportunity of which I might avail myself—(hear, hear)—to make some observations on these two questions. I do implore you—I don't ask you to adopt what may be called extraordinary and abstract opinions on the question of war—I ask you to agree with Lord Derby, who made an observation before he left the previous Government, which ought never to be forgotten, that the greatest interest of England is peace. (Applause.) If it had not been for the wars of our predecessors, or the wars within two centuries of our time, it is impossible to say—if the efforts of our statesmen had been directed to an improvement of the internal condition of our country—it is impossible to say how great would have been the difference in the present position of the millions of the labouring classes amongst us. It is for them I care more. They toil and they sweat, they work from early morn till evening-tide. Their reward—as far as our expenditure is compared with it—their reward is generally but small, because, although they have many of them votes, they have not the same power of impressing upon the Government their views as we have. I say, looking at their condition, we are bound by all that is sacred, if it be possible, to bring together the nations—especially of Europe and the nations of the great American continent—into a firm, constant, enduring, and blessed alliance with the people of our country. And it is for the sake of this that I have made these observations, and I trust that all that has been said here to-day, and what may be said of the opinion here felt, and partly expressed, may not be without some result upon the public opinion of the country. (Cheers.)

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